

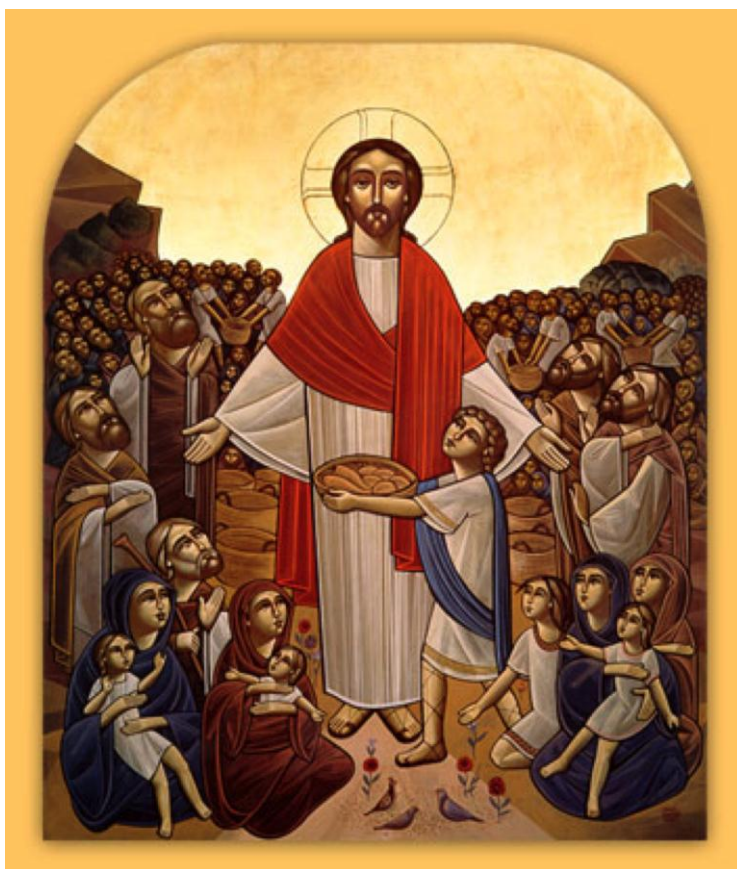


Catholic **Faith, Life & Creed**

A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living

Doctrinal Catechesis Session
Mary Birmingham

EUCCHARIST: The Communion Rite



Feeding the Multitudes: Coptic icon, Public domain



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Option 1: Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2: Use the prayer given below.

Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.
I trust in you: strengthen my trust.
I love you: let me love you more and more.
I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.
I worship you as my first beginning.
I long for you as my last end.
I praise you as my constant helper.
And I call you as my loving protector.
I want to do what you ask of me:
In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.
Let me love you Lord as my God.
And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.
A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I touch.



Note to the Catechist

There may be more material than you can use in a one-hour session.
Select and arrange accordingly. Use questions and material that is best suited for your particular group.



Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the *Breaking Open the Word* worksheet for this week.

Catholic Faith, Life & Creed Version 2.0

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Version 2.0 reflects all recent revisions in the Roman Missal.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Steven Olds
Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR
† Most Rev. John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando

June 27, 2011

Editors: Bill Huebsch, Diana Macalintal, & Nick Wagner

Published cooperatively by
TeamRCIA.com and
PastoralPlanning.com.

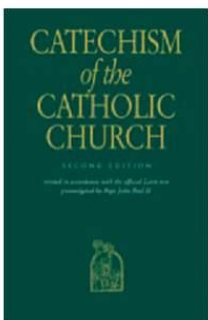


Sharing Human Experience

Catechist leads participants in a small group discussion. Break into small groups (three or four). Remind participants to make time for all in the group to respond to the questions.

- ▶ When considering the spiritual life how would you describe your deepest hunger?
- ▶ What would it take to fill that hunger?

Catechist uses their responses to launch into a discussion about the Communion Rite.



Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Refer to articles 1355-1366 and 1384.

- ▶ The culmination of the eucharistic celebration is the Communion Rite in which the people of God process to the Lord's Table to feast on the presence of Christ in the bread, wine, community, and presider priest.
- ▶ The Church teaches that the presence of Christ is manifest in four ways in the eucharistic liturgy (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #7). The four ways are:

Christ manifest in the gathered community.

- ▶ The Church teaches that the gathered community is *like a sacrament*, a sign, and symbol of Christ's presence.
- ▶ Christ is present in his body, the gathered community.

Christ manifest in the person of his minister the priest.

- ▶ Christ is also present in the person of the priest.
- ▶ As Christ's representative, the priest is a sign of Christ's presence in our midst.

Christ manifest in the proclamation of the Word.

- ▶ Christ is manifested and present to us when the word is proclaimed in the liturgy, in the proclamation of sacred Scripture.
- ▶ The Lectionary for Mass reminds us that Christ is present in his word. Christ speaks to us when the word is proclaimed (LM, 1).

Christ manifested in the species of bread and wine.

- ▶ Christ is ultimately present in the sacred species of bread and wine.
- ▶ When we participate in the Eucharist, we consume Christ and Christ consumes us.
- ▶ His blood runs through our veins.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ Have you ever had the awareness or experience of God's presence when you were gathered with the rest of the community at Mass or when the word was proclaimed?
- ▶ Please describe and share your experience.
- ▶ What does it mean for our lives that Christ is manifest to us?
- ▶ What should our response be?

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in dyads, and then share insights in the wider group. Provide sufficient time for this reflection the wider group.

- ▶ Consider the following statement: Participation in the Eucharist is the most intimate action in which Catholics engage.
- ▶ What does that mean to you?
- ▶ What does it mean that we consume Christ and Christ consumes us?
- ▶ What are the implications for your life?

Theology of the Communion Rite

- ▶ Eating and drinking the Lord's body and blood in the paschal meal is the culmination of the Eucharist.
- ▶ We call it a paschal meal because Jesus is the new and ultimate Passover lamb who was sacrificed for the sake of the world.
- ▶ We recall the bondage of the People of Israel; we remember that God sent Moses to set them free. We remember that God commanded Pharaoh to let his people go. Pharaoh refused. God sent multiple signs to convince Pharaoh. Still Pharaoh refused. Finally, Moses commanded the Israelites to slaughter a lamb and put the blood on their doorposts. The last and ultimate sign for Pharaoh was the death of all first-born males, the death of his first-born son.
- ▶ The only first-born sons saved that night were those who lived in houses marked with the sign of blood.
- ▶ Finally, Pharaoh let them go. Not, however, without a change of mind, a hot pursuit after them into the desert and subsequently into the Red Sea where he and his cohort were swallowed by that same sea. And so God delivered his people Israel.

- ▶ This foundational story of the Jewish people, the Exodus, is integral to our understanding of Eucharist. Jesus is the new Moses, the new Deliverer of God's people.
- ▶ The annual Passover meal of remembrance gives way to this ultimate Supper of remembrance. The deliverance of the Israelites is superseded once and for all by the deliverance brought about by the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb who shed his Blood for the sins of the world (CCC 1362).
- ▶ Every eucharistic liturgy is a re-presentation of this once and for all saving event.
- ▶ Eucharist saves us and gives us Christ's own life.

Real Presence

- ▶ Christ is truly present in the eucharistic species of bread and wine.

Bread

- ▶ When we eat the eucharistic bread, through eyes of faith, we feast on Christ's own body.
- ▶ We eat his body, broken for the sins of the world.
- ▶ As St. Augustine reminded us: We become what we receive. We become Christ's body.

Wine

- ▶ When we drink the eucharistic wine, we feast on Christ's blood, his life force, the ultimate sign of the Covenant he forged with the human race.
- ▶ Christ's blood runs through our veins; his life force becomes ours.
- ▶ Participation in the cup is the fullest sign of the Covenant; he shed his blood for us.
- ▶ Thus, drinking from the cup is integral to the experience of communion.

Bread and Wine

- ▶ Important: Christ's presence is complete and whole in each form. In other words, when a person receives only the eucharistic bread, Christ is present body, soul, and divinity. The fullness of his body and blood is present in the bread alone. When one receives only from the eucharistic cup, Christ is similarly present body, soul, and divinity complete and whole in the eucharistic wine. The fullness of his body and blood is present in the wine alone.

Eucharist, the Eschatological, Heavenly Banquet

- ▶ When the faithful process to the Lord's Table, they do so in the company of the communion of saints, the saints on earth, and the saints in heaven. Every eucharistic feast is a participation in the banquet that is taking place in heaven.
- ▶ Heaven is wedded to earth in this feast, and we are given access to eternal life and salvation.
- ▶ Holy Communion strengthens our union in Christ; it is food for the soul.
- ▶ Viaticum: Holy Communion is likewise food for our final journey. The sacrament

of the dying is called viaticum (food on the way), heavenly food. Just as we were fed in our earthly bodies by our daily bread, so too are we fed for our last journey by the Bread of Life.

Communion Rite

- ▶ A series of smaller rites prepare for the sharing of Communion.
- ▶ The theme of these rites is love, reconciliation, and unity.
- ▶ Gathered around the Lord's Table, God's people, though many become one Body of Christ symbolized by the sign of bread and wine.

The four rites that make up the Communion Rite:

1. The Lord's Prayer
2. Sign of peace
3. Breaking of the bread
4. Communion

The Lord's Prayer

- ▶ The Lord's Prayer is spiritual preparation for Communion.
- ▶ When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we call God our Father, we pray for daily food and for spiritual food.
- ▶ We pray for forgiveness and to be delivered from all temptation, knowing that indeed we have been forgiven by the sacrifice that has been re-presented in our midst.
- ▶ This cleansing prayer is an appropriate preparation for Communion.

Sign of Peace

- ▶ The Sign of Peace repeats the theme of forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer.
- ▶ In antiquity, it was referred to as a *seal* placed on prayer.
- ▶ The biblical imperative of peace hearkens back to the harmony God intended for the world at the creation of the world, the *shalom* of God, a peace in which all creation is in harmony with the Creator. Human beings are in harmony with God, with one another and with the created order. Such peace can only come from God.
- ▶ Such peace was promised by Christ and is realized when *two or more are gathered in his name*. Such is the peace offered at every eucharistic liturgy.
- ▶ It is the *peace* won for us by the sacrifice of Christ, given to us in his risen presence.
- ▶ It is Christ's own peace we offer one another in the sign of peace.
- ▶ When we exchange the sign of peace before Communion, we acknowledge the presence of Christ that we share in Communion to be present in the person to whom we extend peace.

Catechist shares a story from his or her life in which the Sign of Peace had a significant impact or shares the story found in appendix #1.

Breaking of Bread

- ▶ The Breaking of the Bread is a central part of the eucharistic liturgy.
- ▶ The early Church called the eucharistic gathering, *Breaking of the Bread*.
- ▶ It was named after this common action of Christ in the gospels. He broke bread with the multitudes, with his friends at the Last Supper and with his disciples after his resurrection.
- ▶ Christ's Body is broken before us and his blood continues to be poured out for the sins of the world. We too become similarly broken and our lives poured out like a libation.
- ▶ We punctuate the Breaking of the Bread with our song of lament, "*Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*" We remember Christ's broken body. We remember that he shed his blood so that sins may be forgiven.
- ▶ Jesus' disciples recognize him in the breaking of the bread at Emmaus. We too recognize him. Love made manifest in the humiliation of the cross is made present on the banquet table spread before us.
- ▶ When we break the bread together, we ask for the grace to give our lives so others might live, to participate in the ongoing redemption won by Christ for the salvation of the world.
- ▶ The breaking of the bread helps us remember that we too are called to live and die for others.
- ▶ In the breaking of the bread, we remember Christ's passion and death for us and for our sins. Thus, we can say with firm conviction that Eucharist forgives sins.
- ▶ It is the in taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing the body and blood of Christ that we too are taken, blessed, broken, and shared.
- ▶ This significant element in the eucharistic liturgy is an invitation to bring the joys and sorrows of life and join them to the sacrifice made present before us.
- ▶ Is there pain and sorrow in your life? Offer it to Christ on the altar. Are your relationships difficult and causing you grief? Offer them to Christ for the sake of others who similarly suffer. Is there illness in your family? Offer the struggle for the sake of others who are ill and join Christ in shedding his blood for them. Is there more money left at the end of your month? Offer it for the poor who starve and who would give thanks for the smallest morsel of bread. Allow your broken body to be broken for others. Recall the brokenness of the world as you break Christ's body before the hungry assembly. Each of us is broken along with Christ in this table of sacrifice. And so we ready ourselves to become what we have received.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions and to share an experience from their lives. Catechist begins by sharing similar stories. See appendix #2 for an example.

- ▶ Do you know of anyone who has broken the bread of their lives for others without reservation?
- ▶ Have you ever broken the bread of your life for someone else?
- ▶ What did you learn from the experience? What does your experience teach you about the power in the Breaking of the Bread?

Communion Rite

- ▶ Faithful to Jesus' command that we "take and eat" and "take and drink."
- ▶ We process to the altar table and we share in the sacrifice that has been re-presented for us in this celebration.
- ▶ St. Augustine reminded us that when we receive Holy Communion, we become what we have received.
- ▶ We become Christ's body and blood. "Christ has no body now but ours," proclaims St. Theresa. We literally take Christ to the world. Like Christ, we go out and become food and nourishment for others. We shed our blood for others, just as Christ shed his blood for us.
- ▶ Drinking Jesus' blood is a sign of sharing the new covenant, it is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet; it is a sign of our participation in the suffering of Christ. Thus, when both species are offered it is most important that we avail ourselves of so great a treasure.
- ▶ The procession to the table is a sign of the humble poor waiting to be fed and a sign of the journey we all must make, the journey *through* the kingdom now and *to* the kingdom yet to come.
- ▶ The faithful express their unity in Christ as they sing the Communion song.
- ▶ Nourished by this feast, we go forth to feed others, recognizing that we have just shared in the eternal banquet and fully participated in the paschal mystery of Christ.

Dismissal/ Sending Forth

- ▶ The final part of the Mass is called the dismissal rite.
- ▶ The Catechism tells us that Eucharist commits us to the poor (1397).
- ▶ Thus in the dismissal rite we are sent out to be bread for the world.
- ▶ We are people on a mission. We are sent forth to feed the starving world—to bring about the reign of God, to share the good news, to become Eucharist.
- ▶ We are fed, so people can feed off of us, so we can come back again to be fed again.
- ▶ We go forth transformed as a eucharistic people. What does it mean to be a eucharistic people? It means that we are willing to be taken, blessed, broken, and shared with and for the world.
- ▶ If you instill a love of Eucharist in your families, you have given them the greatest gift you could give them. No matter what life hands them, they will always find meaning in the Bread of Life that strengthens and sustains us—Christ present to us midst his absence.

Catechist invites participants to review elements of the COMMUNION RITE in brief, short phrases in response to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ Lord's Prayer: What is the purpose of praying the Lord's Prayer in preparation for Communion? What does it express?
- ▶ Sign of Peace: What is the purpose of the sign of peace and why is it a preparation for Communion?
- ▶ Breaking of Bread: What is the significance of the breaking of bread? What is expressed?
- ▶ Communion Rite: What is the significance of the Communion rite? What do we believe about what we are doing in that rite?
- ▶ What is the significance of the dismissal rite?
- ▶ What does it mean to you that Eucharist commits us to the poor?



Community Connections

Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenge us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world.

Catechist continues:

- ▶ In what way does this teaching on the Communion Rite challenge you and the Christian community?

Catechist informs the group of any parish activity taking place and makes arrangements for group participation. For example: "The Catechism teaches that Eucharist commits us to the poor. This week our parish is remodeling the homeless shelter for women and children in our neighborhood. We need builders, painters, electricians, and people willing to provide sweat labor. We will meet at the center this Saturday morning at 10:00."



Mystagogy & your decision for change

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions.

- ▶ Consider your life right now. In what way is God calling you to be taken, blessed, broken, and shared for something or someone in your life?
- ▶ Consider the questions mentioned earlier: Is there pain and sorrow in your life? Are your relationships difficult and causing you grief? Is there illness in your family? Is there more month left at the end of your money? No matter what the challenge, sorrow, or struggle, Eucharist invites you to offer it for others.
- ▶ What pain, sorrow, or struggle are you willing to offer for others who similarly suffer? Who are the broken hungry in your world? Who desperately needs you to nourish them with the Presence of Christ within you?
- ▶ What needs to change in you for you to more fully realize this responsibility?

Journal

Continue responding to the previous questions throughout the coming week.



Closing Prayer

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with Intercessions, Doxology (“Glory be to the Father...”), a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA #90-97.

Option 2: Prefaces for Holy Eucharist II P 48, Sacramentary. Lord’s Prayer, Intercessions.

Appendix

1. STORY: SIGN OF PEACE

A husband and wife were engaged in a very angry argument before leaving home for Mass one Sunday. Heated words were exchanged. Neither person was willing to give an inch; each held fast to their own positions. The anger continued throughout the Mass until it came time for the Sign of Peace. Both realized that they could not come to the table and receive Christ in the Eucharist with such animosity in their hearts. Each approached the other at the Sign of Peace and extended a heartfelt apology. No doubt, the grace of Christ, and the reconciling power of the Eucharist strengthened such reconciliation in them. The sign of peace gave them the opportunity to express it in sign and symbol.

2. My story.

We were at the end of our rope. A situation in our home was causing untold grief. We both were at the point where we could take no more when indeed the situation happened again as it had over and over again. I wept. I simply could not rise to the occasion to deal with it. Without a word, my husband rose, painstakingly dealt with the issue, ugly as it was, and uttered not one word of complaint. In my 40 years of marriage, I had never known greater love for him.

3. Examples of people who have allowed their bodies to be broken for others:

- Alcoholics who commit their lives to helping other alcoholics.
- One parish decided to allow a hospital devoted to the care of those with Tourette's syndrome to bring their patients to Mass in spite of the outburst and profanity that would be heard. They prepared the parish and decided it was more important to offer Christ's body and blood in the community than to worry about outbursts and inappropriate language.
- A woman whose life is upside down and knows what it means to be falsely accused of something, turned her bitterness and anger into healing for others. She reached out to women in prison and forged deep and lasting relationships and brought meaning to the life of prison inmates.
- A woman, who had been abused, turned her pain into life for others by working a spousal abuse center.
- The neophyte in our process of initiation who took a homeless woman with end-stage breast cancer into her home and nursed her and offered her Christ's own compassion. She cared for her through the process of dying until the day she died in her arms.

- The man in our parish who gave up a high paying job to develop water treatment for Third World only to experience threats and persecution, not to mention betrayal.
- The man in our process of initiation who went to his boss and told him that the man he just laid off would not be able to get another job at his age. This young man told his boss that he was young and would be able to find work easier than the middle-aged man would. He thus asked the man to lay him off rather than the more aged man. The boss was so touched that he gave the young man a severance package of \$60,000. The young man was able to go back to school and learn a more marketable trade.

Handout on the Communion Rite

Theology of the Communion Rite

Christ manifest in the gathered community.

- ▶ The Church teaches that the gathered community is *like a sacrament*, a sign, and symbol of Christ's presence.
- ▶ Christ is present in his body, the gathered community.

Christ manifest in the person of his minister the priest.

- ▶ Christ is also present in the person of the priest.
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Christ manifest in the proclamation of the Word.

- ▶ Christ is manifested and present to us when the word is proclaimed in the liturgy, in the proclamation of sacred Scripture.
- ▶ The Lectionary for Mass reminds us that Christ is present in his word. Christ speaks to us when the word is proclaimed (LM, 1).

Christ manifested in the species of bread and wine.

- ▶ Christ is ultimately present in the sacred species of bread and wine.
 - ▶ When we participate in the Eucharist, we consume Christ and Christ consumes us.
 - ▶ His blood runs through our veins.
-
- ▶ Eating and drinking the Lord's body and blood in the paschal meal is the culmination of the Eucharist.
 - ▶ We call it a paschal meal because Jesus is the new and ultimate Passover lamb who was sacrificed for the sake of the world.
 - ▶ We recall the bondage of the People of Israel; we remember that God sent Moses to set them free. We remember that God commanded Pharaoh to let his people go. Pharaoh refused. God sent multiple signs to convince Pharaoh. Still Pharaoh refused. Finally, Moses commanded the Israelites to slaughter a lamb and put the blood on their doorposts. The last and ultimate sign for Pharaoh was the death of all first-born males, the death of his first-born son.
 - ▶ The only first-born sons saved that night were those who lived in houses marked with the sign of blood.
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- ▶ This foundational story of the Jewish people, the Exodus, is integral to our understanding of Eucharist. Jesus is the new Moses, the new Deliverer of God's

people.

- ▶ The annual Passover meal of remembrance gives way to this ultimate Supper of remembrance. The deliverance of the Israelites is superseded once and for all by the deliverance brought about by the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb who shed his Blood for the sins of the world (CCC 1362).
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Bread

- ▶ When we eat the Eucharistic bread, through eyes of faith, we feast on Christ's own body.
- ▶ We eat his body, broken for the sins of the world.
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- ▶ When we drink the Eucharistic wine, we feast on Christ's blood, his life force, the ultimate sign of the Covenant he forged with the human race.
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- ▶ Participation in the cup is the fullest sign of the Covenant; he shed his blood for us.
- ▶ Thus, drinking from the cup is integral to the experience of communion.

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Eucharist, the Eschatological, Heavenly Banquet

- ▶ When the faithful process to the Lord's Table, they do so in the company of the communion of saints, the saints on earth, and the saints in heaven. Every Eucharistic feast is a participation in the banquet that is taking place in heaven.
- ▶ Heaven is wedded to earth in this feast, and we are given access to eternal life and salvation.
- ▶ Holy Communion strengthens our union in Christ; it is food for the soul.
- ▶ Viaticum: Holy Communion is likewise food for our final journey. The sacrament of the dying is called viaticum (food on the way), heavenly food. Just as we were fed in our earthly bodies by our daily bread, so too are we fed for our last journey by the Bread of Life.

Communion Rite

- ▶ A series of smaller rites prepare for the sharing of Communion.
- ▶ The theme of these rites is love, reconciliation, and unity.
- ▶ Gathered around the Lord's Table, God's people, though many become one Body of Christ symbolized by the sign of bread and wine.

The four rites that make up the Communion Rite:

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- ▶ In antiquity, it was referred to as a *seal* placed on prayer.
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- ▶ It is the *peace* won for us by the sacrifice of Christ, given to us in his risen presence.
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- ▶ When we exchange the sign of peace before Communion, we acknowledge the presence of Christ that we share in Communion to be present in the person to whom we extend peace.

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- ▶ The early Church called the Eucharistic gathering, *Breaking of the Bread*.
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his resurrection.

- ▶ Christ's Body is broken before us and his blood continues to be poured out for the sins of the world. We too become similarly broken and our lives poured out like a libation.
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- ▶ Jesus' disciples recognize him in the breaking of the bread at Emmaus. We too recognize him. Love made manifest in the humiliation of the cross is made present on the banquet table spread before us.
- ▶ When we break the bread together, we ask for the grace to give our lives so others might live, to participate in the ongoing redemption won by Christ for the salvation of the world.
- ▶ The breaking of the bread helps us remember that we too are called to live and die for others.
- ▶ In the breaking of the bread, we remember Christ's passion and death for us and for our sins. Thus, we can say with firm conviction that Eucharist forgives sins.
- ▶ It is the in taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing the body and blood of Christ that we too are taken, blessed, broken, and shared.
- ▶ This significant element in the Eucharistic liturgy is an invitation to bring the joys and sorrows of life and join them to the sacrifice made present before us.
- ▶ Is there pain and sorrow in your life? Offer it to Christ on the altar. Are your relationships difficult and causing you grief? Offer them to Christ for the sake of others who similarly suffer. Is there illness in your family? Offer the struggle for the sake of others who are ill and join Christ in shedding his blood for them. Is there more month left at the end of your money? Offer it for the poor who starve and who would give thanks for the smallest morsel of bread. Allow your broken body to be broken for others. Recall the brokenness of the world as you break Christ's body before the hungry assembly. Each of us is broken along with Christ in this table of sacrifice. And so we ready ourselves to become what we have received.

Communion Rite

- ▶ Faithful to Jesus' command that we "take and eat" and "take and drink."
- ▶ We process to the altar table and we share in the sacrifice that has been re-presented for us in this celebration.
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- ▶ The procession to the table is a sign of the humble poor waiting to be fed and a sign of the journey we all must make, the journey *through* the kingdom now and *to* the kingdom yet to come.
- ▶ The faithful express their unity in Christ as they sing the Communion song.
- ▶ Nourished by this feast, we go forth to feed others, recognizing that we have just shared in the eternal banquet and fully participated in the paschal mystery of Christ.

Dismissal/ Sending Forth

- ▶ The final part of the Mass is called the dismissal rite.
- ▶ The Catechism tells us that Eucharist commits us to the poor (1397).
- ▶ Thus in the dismissal rite we are sent out to be bread for the world.
- ▶ We are people on a mission. We are sent forth to feed the starving world—to bring about the reign of God, to share the good news, to become Eucharist.
- ▶ We are fed, so people can feed off of us, so we can come back again to be fed again.
- ▶ We go forth transformed as a Eucharistic people. What does it mean to be a Eucharistic people? It means that we are willing to be taken, blessed, broken, and shared with and for the world.

If you instill a love of Eucharist in your families, you have given them the greatest gift you could give them. No matter what life hands them, they will always find meaning in the Bread of Life that strengthens and sustains us—Christ present to us midst his absence.